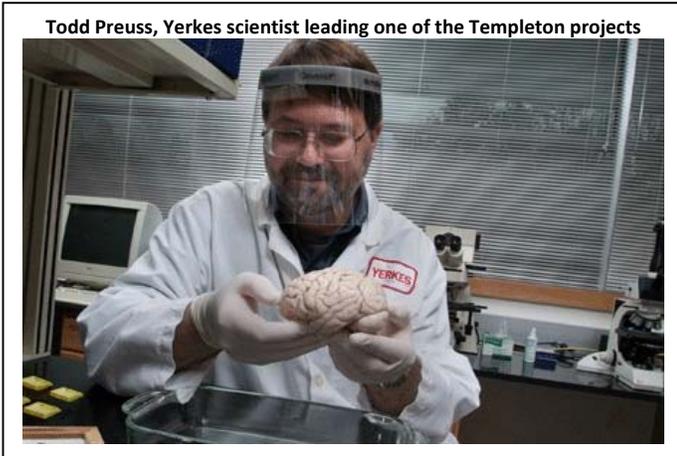


CBN and CTSN Team Receive \$3.4 Million to Study How the Human Brain Expresses Positive Emotions

Center for Behavioral Neuroscience (CBN) and Center for Translational Social Neuroscience (CTSN) investigators have received a \$3.4 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation (www.templeton.org) to investigate the neurobiology behind the evolution of positive emotions and prosocial behaviors, such as empathy, compassion and cooperation. Such insight is fundamental to understanding how complex human emotions and social interactions are expressed.



“This funding from the Templeton Foundation represents one of the largest single investments into research on how the human brain evolved the ability to express these positive attributes and emotions,” said Dr. Elliott Albers, director of the Center for Behavioral Neuroscience (CBN), a consortium of scientists from seven Atlanta higher education institutions.

The research will build on advances that have been made in the understanding of the neural basis of positive emotions and will employ state-of-the-art new technologies to investigate the neural mechanisms responsible for prosocial capabilities in the human brain.

The project will be a collaborative endeavor, involving a team of researchers from the CBN and CTSN at Georgia State, Emory, the Yerkes National Primate Center and Zoo Atlanta. The project’s primary goal will be to determine if human forms of prosocial emotion and behavior, which are controlled by neural circuits in the brain, are unique to humans or are present in other nonhuman primates.

“This is yet another indication of the collective strength of our CBN and CTSN scientists in the field of social neuroscience” said Larry Young, director of the CTSN at Emory. “This award, along with the NIH Conte Center grant awarded to Yerkes-based CTSN faculty last month to study the effects of oxytocin on social cognition, are strong testaments to our reputation as unparalleled centers of excellence for social neurobiology”. CTSN investigators on the Templeton team include Todd Preuss, Jim Rilling, Bill Hopkins, Larry Young, Diana Robins, and Tricia King.

By comparing the structure and function of the neural mechanisms regulating prosocial behavior in human and nonhuman primates, it will be possible to define the nature and evolutionary development of characteristics such as empathy, compassion and cooperation, and to understand how uniquely human capacities for pro-social behavior evolved from capacities present in other primates.

The research team will work to determine if oxytocin, a chemical signal in the brain, acts uniquely within the human brain to aid human prosocial emotion and behavior or if it acts similarly in nonhuman primates as well.

The funding will support an exhibit at Zoo Atlanta designed to develop wider public awareness of neuroscience research. The interactive exhibit will include educational activities that will allow zoo visitors to learn more about emotional and behavioral similarities and differences between humans and nonhuman primates.

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The CTSN mission is to bring together basic and clinical scientists in order to facilitate the translation of our understanding of the social brain into novel treatments for social deficits in psychiatric disorders, including autism.

The Center for Behavioral Neuroscience was established in 1999 with funding from the National Science Foundation and the Georgia Research Alliance.